

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Coverstar

Utah Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Going Lean Helps Coverstar Improve Delivery Performance

Client Profile:

Coverstar has been in the pool cover manufacturing business for over 10 years. The owner, Lanny Smith, has revolutionized many aspects of the industry during that time. Most companies are satisfied with the tried and true method of making covers, however, Coverstar is constantly looking for ways to improve their product and to make it more reliable than the competition. Coverstar drives the entire industry by continually creating solutions to even the most challenging cover application. No other company offers the range of options available at Coverstar.

Situation:

In 2005 Coverstar brought in Don Bluhm as the operations manager. Don saw a typical manufacturing environment with lots of inventory and limited flow and limited space. The company had also planned on creating a new product line and needed space to produce this new product.

Solution:

Concerned about the ability to implement a new product line, the need to reduce lead times, and keeping pace with tremendous growth over the past 10 years has been Coverstar's challenges. Don Bluhm, their Operations Manager, realized this and contacted the MEP Utah and had them help launch some lean initiatives. They began with Value Stream Mapping Coverstar's current and future states and then set forth to implement the plan for the future state. With most companies this journey can take up to five years. Coverstar managed to complete their first iteration in just eight months with MEP Utah assistance. Don began with sending his key staff to a lean 101 course with the MEP. This was followed by training and implementation in the areas of 5S and eliminating waste also through the MEP. Coverstar's Don Bluhm also completely rearranged the factory to accommodate continuous flow on three major flow lines and was able to balance these flow lines.

Results:

To date Coverstar has reduced lead time from 48 hours to same day ship in most cases. (The industry standard is two to three weeks.) They were also able to reduce floor space by 25% even with the new product line. They increased their operating profit by 35% as well as a 20% increase in sales while maintaining the same size workforce. Coverstar was also able to reduce set-up times from two hours in some cases down to 15 minutes.

Testimonial:

I am familiar with lean manufacturing concepts but needed to get my team on board and heading in the same direction. The Lean 101 class and the Value Stream Mapping helped us get a clear picture of how to make it happen. With follow-on help from MEP, we have been able to implement several lean tools with success.

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Don Bluhm, VP Operations